

# THOMPSON SAYS WHITMAN TOLD BIG TRUTHS

Lays "Improper Suggestions" to Ex-Governor, Burke and Thomas.

TALKS OF ALBANY GRAFT  
No Goldbags as in Roman Days, but Smister Moves in 20th Century Way.

Senator George F. Thompson cut loose yesterday in the City Hall before the Senate Judiciary Committee, which is investigating his assertion of improper influence in connection with legislation which led to the publication of stories about "wish" funds and "dough bags." He acknowledged that so far as he knew there was no money in Albany, but mentioned the names of three persons who, he considered, had made improper suggestions to him. These men were, he said:

Former Governor Whitman, who he declared, told him Theodore B. Shonta had asked him (Mr. Whitman) to see the Senator in regard to the passage of the Carson-Martin bill for the financial relief of the traction companies. The Governor had told him that he could make \$50,000 a year in law practice here and that he was a logical candidate for Governor.

Richard H. Burke, who he asserted, interested himself in the passage of both gas and traction legislation, and suggested to him that certain men were willing to put up a \$50,000 fund to pay his campaign expenses.

C. G. M. Thomas, Vice-President of the Consolidated Gas Company, who Senator Thompson alleged offered to assist him in starting a trust company in Lockport, his home city, and was interested in the passage of the Wickes-Martin bill, which would enable the Public Service Commission to investigate the eight-cent gas law.

These men have all denied that they made any improper suggestions to the Senator.

**Thompson Denies Each Charge.**  
On the other hand Senator Thompson denied yesterday categorically every imputation statement made by ex-Gov. Whitman and Mr. Burke which involved him in any way with the passage of public utility legislation or looking for political honors. He declared that the statement of the former Governor on the stand at the Albany session of the committee was a "fabrication" and branded individual assertions one after the other as untrue.

The Senator declared that George A. Glyn, chairman of the Public Service Commission, on the morning of the famous St. Regis meeting with Mr. Whitman had told him that the former Governor was expecting him at luncheon.

In 1918, the Senator said, Gov. Whitman in telling him he was opposed to the Pratt bill, which would have given the Public Service Commission the power to raise the fares to 8 cents, referred to the fact that he would be running for Governor in the fall. He would have his picture in the cars, the Governor told Senator Thompson according to the latter's testimony, and was afraid that the people, who had paid extra for riding in these cars, would refer to him as a "Penny Governor." He would rather see the fare raised to 10 cents than to 8, Thompson said the Governor told him.

Denying the stories of Burke, the lobbyist, Senator Thompson said that he had first made himself known over the telephone as "Nick Carter." Burke gave him much valuable information for the Public Service Commission investigation. Thereafter he got to know him, but he continued to call himself "Nick" or "Carter" in communications. The Senator told about Burke's solicitude for the interests of the gas companies and the traction lines and how he posed as always "helping" somebody.

Burke told him one day, the Senator said, that Mr. Shonta wanted to help finance his campaign for the Senate out of gratitude for destroying the "wrecking" letters that he (Thompson) was "legged to have obtained from Mrs. Shonta." Thompson declared that such letters never existed.

**Burke and Expense Accounts.**

The Senator declared that when he was seeking an extension of time for the report of the Public Service Commission because its expense would not be paid by the State after the committee's time limit had expired certain representatives of traction and gas interests with whom he was conferring on amendments to the law suggested that they chip in to meet the Baltimore Hotel bills. He observed that the money was coming in so fast that he was almost ashamed to take it, that he had made inquiry among the other lawyers and found that such big fees were the custom; that he intended to buy a house and lot that he had been obliged to increase the help in his office until he had it completely filled and that he could not get more room until after October 1.

"I had had no notice of what he wanted to talk with me about until he was trying to get at it. He talked along until it became apparent that he had no particular work for me to do as an attorney and that the public can make up its own mind as to what he meant by the suggestion."

Having received these confidences from the former Governor Senator Thompson evidently felt that he ought to reciprocate and intimate that he was earning up State about all that he needed. He would be pardoned, he hoped, for repeating it, but he felt hurt about the declaration of Mr. Whitman that he (Thompson) was trying to "break into New York with an axe" when as a matter of fact "I had gone to his hotel at his request to talk with him."

**Doesn't Need to Practise Here.**

"I do not have to practise law in New York," said the Senator, "and my own circumstances are such that I earn enough money honestly and always have all my life to get along and live well enough in these times. I have a practice that brought me in last year upward of \$10,000, and I have an income of over \$15,000 a year myself; and I do not have to look for a place to practise law, and I had had all my arrangements made. I came to New York when I wanted to and I can leave also when I want to, which is more than some of those who live here can."

"And I told that, some of that, to Gov. Whitman, and I told him that the idea of practising law never had appealed to me; that I always felt that if somebody broke into the practice of law down here it would mean the end of the practice that he got not because of his ability as a lawyer or his ability to present a case to a court, but because of some favor that he might have done somebody else who was in public office, and I did not want any of that."

"His next entered into a talk on State

politics and suggested that the next candidate for Governor should come from up-State," continued the Senator, "that it would be the most available candidate and that he intended to run for United States Senator."

**Shonta's Name Brought In.**

"After this he leaned back in his chair and said: 'What I wanted to see you about was that Mr. Shonta wanted me to talk to you about the Carson-Martin bill and I want you to support it, and he asked me to be his agent.'"

"I said, 'Why, Governor, you do not understand this bill. It is not simply a question of permitting the Public Service Commission to regulate fares, but it contains a provision for the payment of tract obligations. I cannot support it and I have made it perfectly clear that I cannot.'"

According to the Senator Mr. Whitman argued that it would be bad politics for the Republicans to defeat the Carson-Martin bill, as when the receiverships of the public would charge them up to the party if the bill should be killed. Mr. Whitman was anxious to see him the next day, Sunday, and also on Monday, but he had engagements and did not do it.

"I did not want to talk any more about the bill," said the Senator. "The more I thought about the situation the more I got about it anyway. And I did not want to talk with him anyhow, even if I had the time."

"When he says I called him on the telephone and asked to see him he made a false statement, and when he says that he suggested that I come to his office he made another false statement. I don't know where his office is and he did not suggest that I come to his office. In fact, urged that I should see him even when I talked to him on the telephone, and then wanted to know if I would come back at the end of the week, and I told him I had to go home. I think that is in here somewhere."

At this point the Senator broke the tenor of the hearing when he interrupted in explanation of his remarks at the Albany session in regard to certain things he and Mr. Whitman had to eat that "looked different, but tasted the same."

ing to me here, how it is in some ways. The whole situation there is one of suggestion, a lot of archaic rules that kind of blind you up. A perfectly honest legislator can go to Albany and vote twenty-five times and have no real influence, and half the time not know anything about it.

Q. Now, Senator, can you tell of any other suggestions that you would characterize as sinister, except those made by three persons whom you have mentioned?

A. Well, that is a serious thing to do. I cannot tell in any shape, where I feel that I ought to be because I don't know whether there were or not.

**Burke's Offer Discounted.**

Talking about the alleged suggestion of Mr. Burke that \$50,000 could be made for a gubernatorial campaign for him, Senator Thompson said that he knew Burke couldn't get anywhere. "The other suggestion was a much more dangerous one."

Accepting the reference as one to former Gov. Whitman, Mr. Jordan said to him: "He did not offer you a dollar, did he?"

"No," was the reply, "but he said I could make \$50,000 a year in the law business. Now, I am not a lawyer."

Senator Thompson was on the stand all day, with the exception of a few minutes when Burke, who made a protest that he had important business and could not wait around any longer was put on for some further questions by Frank Moss, counsel for Senator Thompson. When he asked Senator Thompson to state the life of Senator Burke, the Senator, at the committee, called a halt, and Burke jumped down with muttered statements about "scavengers."

In response to a request of counsel Senator Thompson was permitted to tell his story in the form of a continuous statement from notes and a package of letters which he had in his pocket at the point of the opening of the Public Service Commission investigating committee in January, 1918, and brought the witness through various adventures up to the adjournment of the committee in the Legislature. This narration completed, the Senator started out to make categorical denials of the previous testimony of former Governor Whitman and Mr. Burke from written notes.

**Didn't Call All in Albany Crooks.**

Referring to the former's testimony the Senator said:

"In the Albany session of the committee on March 29 I did not say they were all crooks in Albany or use any such expression or anything like it directly or indirectly. I was only using the expression that I was going to break in with an axe, or anything like that. I did not ask if there was a vacancy in his firm and did not ask him for any place in his firm and did not want to join his firm and do not now."

"I never asked him directly or indirectly about going in with Mr. Stanchfield, but I was talking about the fact that he was in the field or to take up any matter of any kind with Mr. Stanchfield. In fact, at that time I had already made arrangements with Mr. Stanchfield to go into business, and I have already testified to the conversation, or such parts of it as was drawn out by questions from Mr. Cheney."

The Senator's statement on the stand at Albany was a fabrication. He has attempted to deceive the public by interweaving a lot of unimportant facts in an attempt to make it appear that he was a "Penny Governor." I did not ask if there was a vacancy in his firm and did not ask him for any place in his firm and did not want to join his firm and do not now."

"Second, that I sought to make a connection to practise law in New York, which is untrue."

"Third, that I sought his advice in relation to the Carson-Martin bill, which is untrue."

"Fourth, that I gave him an intimation that I was going around talking about the Carson-Martin bill looking for an excuse to change my attitude, which is untrue."

"Fifth, that I was using that opportunity to criticize Gov. Hughes, which is untrue."

"Sixth, that I was using that opportunity to criticize Senator Burlingame, which is untrue."

"Seventh, that I was using that opportunity to belittle Senator Davenport, which is untrue."

"Eighth, that I tried to see him on Monday and sought an opportunity, which is untrue."

"Ninth, this conversation was not one which took the form of small talk or gossip."

"The now apparent purpose of the Governor's false statements on the occasion while testifying in Albany before the adjournment of the Legislature was to make trouble for me with my friends and drive such of my friends as he claimed I had ridiculed or abused to the support of the Carson-Martin bill, for which he was working."

**Tells of the \$50,000 Talk.**

"The fact is that in the St. Regis conversation the Governor first said suggested that I come to New York to practise law and suggested \$50,000 a year as the minimum that I could earn."

"He went into some detail as to the amount of business he was doing; said that he had earned \$65,000 in three months; that his concern would do over \$200,000 this year; that his office expenses were about \$2,000 a month; that he drew two bills in one week and got \$1,000 apiece for them; that he settled one lawsuit without appearing in court at all and got \$15,000 for it. He observed that the money was coming in so fast that he was almost ashamed to take it, that he had made inquiry among the other lawyers and found that such big fees were the custom; that he intended to buy a house and lot that he had been obliged to increase the help in his office until he had it completely filled and that he could not get more room until after October 1."

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**Thompson's Letter to Hyman.**

Senator Thompson in his letter to Mayor Hyman referred to the Albany hearing on the Carson-Martin bill, and added:

"After hearing all the arguments I have concluded that I must oppose any legislation which would make it possible for a body like the Public Service Commission by its mere ukase to change the terms of a contract between a municipality and a traction company in favor of the traction company without at the same time making it also possible for the municipality through some agency to change its contract with the traction company in favor of the people."

"But it has been claimed on behalf of certain of the traction interests that because the 'dual subway' contracts were made under a special provision of law the city of New York is not in a position legally to change them. I write this letter for the purpose of having you advise me whether there is lacking any power in the city of New York to amend the 'dual subway' contracts if the traction companies, laboring under a sudden wave of contrition, should come to the New York city government offering to make a new and fair deal with it."

"Should you find that there is any lack of authority in the city government to deal with these traction companies, any amendment of the contracts in favor of the city I should be glad to stand sponsor for any proper legislation that will give the city government such power."

"I appreciate that some of the members or patrons of the Stock Exchange sometimes get very much worked up about 'widows and orphans.' That question does not seem to bother these gentlemen, however, when they are engaged in the merry task of unloading 'securities' on these same widows and orphans. What class of these securities is so held does not appear, but it is certain that all of them were acquired subject to the contract with the city. If the local authorities think that the people ought to pay more in fares so as to make the Stock Exchange value thereof more attractive—that is a matter for the local government to deal with."

"In plain language, as I see the situation, the day of accounting is approaching. It is 'pay day' for manipulation of the traction companies' stocks and bonds. Those who speculated in their securities must pay the fines, having danced in their time. The threat of receiverships means nothing, so far as the people are concerned. Legislation can still compel five cent fares and free transfers on all lines in the city, and I hardly think that any legislature will dare deny such legislation, if it is, or becomes, necessary."

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fully outside of their course of experience, absolutely refusing to apply the scientific knowledge they have gained in accumulating strength, and insist on giving out charity to their fellow creatures in the form of money or something they know nothing about themselves.

"For instance, Andrew Carnegie accumulates his strength by organizing men, making steel and accumulating scientific knowledge they have gained in accumulating strength, and insist on giving out charity to their fellow creatures in the form of money or something they know nothing about themselves."

"You have, however, the most wonderful opportunity for success, and practically express the idea of Brotherhood of any man who lives."

"In the greatest city in the universe you control, say, the Consolidated Gas Company, which grows the high voltage Edison Electric Company. You control a large number of interstate railroads, including the coal carrying roads, which include the coal control, and the competing modes of conveyance, as well as the mines themselves, and the coal lands on which no operations have been installed. You control the electric companies, sources of financial strength and organizations of civic and political power."

"If you go on and permit the operation of the utilities mentioned in this great city in a fashion so behind the inventions of the age that you lose money and your 5,000,000 brothers and sisters in your own city are obliged to pay outrageous prices and in some cases go without necessities, in their effort to get comforts and conveniences, and receive a service so shoddy poor that they are ready to welcome any suggestion of change, no matter how dangerous the source."

"In the last twenty-five years discoveries in relation to electricity have come so fast that the gas houses located in a city like this should be obsolete and is of no value. A coal wagon on the streets of New York should be a thing of the past; all that should be generated and can be generated at the source of supply, either a gas well, an oil well, a coal mine or a waterfall. It can and should be generated at the source of electric energy and distributed to your brothers and sisters in this great city on a wire, and at a price so much cheaper than the present rate that you would be put to the system in operation here you would be surprised at the number of your neighbors who would become converts to the system."

"And you have the power to put it in operation. All you have to do is to say so, and it will be done."

"I should like every coal company, every railroad company, every electric company and every gas company would oppose it, would say that I was a socialist, a communist, a socialist, a socialist, would call me names, and the result would be that I would get nowhere."

The letter ended by giving a list of the names of the traction companies, which would be put to the test of the public from putting the scheme into effect.

Burke insisted that Thompson try the scheme up with Mr. Brady. They were examined by Mr. Brady, but never came of it, although Burke anxiously inquired about it later.

"You suppressed a great work of literature, the 'dual subway' contracts, which Mr. Rockefeller," said Senator Foley with a smile.

On March 16 at the Republican Club Burke saw the letter, which he had made such a mystery. It was addressed by the Senator to Mayor Hyman and was mailed that night.

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body laughed, including the Democrats on the committee and in the room. Mr. Jordan asked the committee to issue subpoenas for the vouchers of the Thompson committee at the Baltimore Hotel in 1918 and also a summons for the manager, saying he wanted to settle the question of veracity between his client (Burke) and the Senator. Burke has testified that Thompson wanted an extension of time for the committee because he wanted to fix some of the Baltimore expenses.